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STATE PASS TO AID

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- With regards to Middle East issues, lead stories in all papers today, June 10, focus on Prime Minister Sharon's visit to the United States and his talks with President Bush. Other stories highlight the Palestinian announcement of a new smaller cabinet. Editorial commentaries continue to criticize Israeli violence against the Palestinians and its arrogance vis--vis peace issues. Commentaries also criticize the United States and its "blind" support for Israel and Prime Minister Sharon.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Wrong message from Washington"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (06/10) editorializes: "U.S. President George W. Bush is wrong to refuse to set a timetable for Palestinian statehood. Such a timetable would give Palestinians hope. President Bush has adopted the position of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The stand he took offers further support to the Israeli government. That translates into mere obstacles to efforts aimed at reviving the peace process. The U.S. backing is allowing Sharon to become more entrenched in ideological positions with which Middle East peace cannot be reached. President Bush still has an opportunity to put the peace process back in motion. His war on terrorism must be paralleled by a war on injustice. In the Middle East, this injustice has lasted for far too long. It is the cause of all the tension in the region. Before it ends, peace will not prevail. Nor will the U.S. credibility in the region be salvaged and its claim to the moral high ground in fighting terrorism accepted."

-- "Finishing off peace"

Center-left influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/10) editorializes: "Sharon would not have dared to be so arrogant and intransigent and so belittling of world opinion had it not been for the encouragement he continuously receives from the Bush administration and had it not been for the perfect political coverage he is provided by the U.S. administration. It is sad that, while there are some Israelis who are criticizing Sharon for his methods and actually hold him responsible for the biggest collapse in this region, Washington turns a blind eye to Israeli practices. We resent America's hesitant positions and we urge the international community to act fast before this region crosses the threshold towards a more serious stage of violence and escalation."

-- "No use addressing the Americans"

Daily columnist Musa Hawamdeh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (06/10): "Arab leaders may as well save their efforts. U.S. President George W. Bush deafens his ears to the truth, not because he does not know that Israel is the one that is occupying Palestinian and Arab lands, nor because he has a grudge against us. But only because he is controlled by Congress, which is considered more extremist than the Israeli Knesset itself. No point then pleading with and urging the Bush administration to change its stance or presenting new initiatives. The Arabs themselves must force Israel to abide by their will and desire."

-- "Sharon is at home in the White House"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm

(06/10): "Since President Bush came to power, and for the sixth time, Sharon enters the White House. He is one of the family. On the other hand, the Palestinian President did not even receive an invitation to visit Washington. This is not protocol, but a situation where the U.S. administration is negotiating with one party and not the other, when it claims that it is trying to resolve the conflict. Washington, under President Bush, may be anything for the Middle East issue, but a peacemaker between the Arabs and Israel. Talking about a Palestinian state that the U.S. administration is going to establish is now just a dream. In the absence of an Israeli peace partner and of a serious American administration, the path to the Palestinian state is very clear. That path is resistance for freedom, a path chosen by all people throughout the world, including the American people."

GNEHM